



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA
Metropolitan Planning Organization

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of July 23, 2003

3:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Blue Room

(County Commissioners' Briefing Room)

Old Guilford County Courthouse

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Don Vaughan	Acting TAC Chair
Doug Galyon	NC Board of Transportation
Robbie Perkins	Greensboro City Council
Keith Holliday	Mayor of Greensboro
Bob Landreth	Guilford County Board of Commissioners

ATTENDANCE

Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO	Peggy Holland	GDOT/MPO
Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO	Adam Fischer	GDOT
Scott Rhine	PART	George Linney	GTA
Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT	Philip Kempf	GDOT/MPO
Monica Kerr	NCDOT	Allen Purser	GSO Chamber of Commerce
Mike Mills	NCDOT Division 7		

Don Vaughan called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of June 25, 2003

Robbie Perkins moved for approval of the minutes. Bob Landreth seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. Amend 2002 – 2008 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Jeff Sovich advised that this proposed amendment accomplishes two things: it transfers an award of additional CMAQ funds from FHWA to FTA, to enable their use on capital expenditures; and it programs the funds into FY 2003, as Section 5307 funds. These funds need to be transferred and programmed into FY 2003, and submitted to NCDOT prior to the August 7th Board of Transportation meeting, to ensure that the funds do not lapse.

The Greensboro Transit Authority has been awarded \$2.6 million, which is being programmed to purchase 8 expansion buses. PART is receiving \$3.125 million, which is being allocated to purchase 5 expansion buses and to fund design and land acquisition for a transit transfer facility. The federal portion of these projects is accompanied by 10% match amounts at the state and local levels.

The purpose of the GTA expansion buses is to reduce headways to 30 minutes during peak hours, system-wide, instead of only on selected routes. He asked for a brief update on the status of the transfer facility. Scott Rhine reported that the transfer facility will be located on West Market Street next to the railroad tracks, which is one of the potential station sites that was examined in the BRT and commuter rail service study. Because of the multiple-use nature of this facility, PART will be able to make use of these funds now, regardless of whether the BRT or commuter rail system is developed. The requested action is to approve the amendments as presented.

Bob Landreth moved to approve the amendments as presented; Robbie Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendments to the 2002 - 2008 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

3. Amend 2004 – 2010 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Jeff Sovich advised that this proposed amendment shifts the previously transferred CMAQ funds from FY 2003 to FY 2004, thereby enabling GTA and PART to apply the funds to their projects. Because these funds were awarded and transferred so late in FY 2003, GTA and PART need to shift the funds to FY 2004 in order to actually use them.

The amendment for GTA remains the same at \$2.6 million, for the purchase of 8 expansion buses. PART's program however, includes an additional amount of \$983,679 in the form of a Section 5309 earmark. This additional funding is programmed to purchase 4 more expansion buses, for a total of 9. The total amount of PART's amendments for FY 2004 is \$4,354,599. The federal portion of these projects is accompanied by 10% match amounts at the state and local levels.

The shift of funds from FY 03 to FY 04 is simply an accounting procedure to ensure that the CMAQ funds don't lapse. The NCDOT Public Transportation Division has created a new pot of discretionary CMAQ funds to allocate to non-attainment and maintenance areas to supplement the Section 5309 funds from FTA. This is a new program that has not previously been seen. The requested action is to approve the amendments as presented.

Robbie Perkins moved to approve the amendments as presented; Bob Landreth seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendments to the 2004 - 2010 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. East Guilford Traffic Separation Study

Jeff Sovich advised that the NCDOT rail division has conducted this study of the range of crossing safety improvements needed to allow 79 mile per hour rail traffic through the area. The study team, lead by Wilbur Smith Associates has identified specific recommendations. Richard Atkins will provide an overview of the study results.

Richard Atkins advised that the Rail Division undertook this study as an effort at proactive planning in response to projections of significant increases in the number of freight and passenger trains through the study area. Also passenger trains have been authorized to travel up to 79 miles per hour through Guilford County and other areas. To put this study in perspective, there were 78 highway-rail crossing collisions in North Carolina in 2002, resulting in 2 deaths and 20 injuries. If not for the proactive efforts of the rail division in aggressively examining options for improving and closing crossings, those figures would be significantly higher.

This study had 4 goals, against which the team weighed its findings: 1) to identify existing safety concerns in the corridor, which included 23 crossings from Lindsay Street in east Greensboro to Huffine Street, just east of Gibsonville; 2) to enhance rail and vehicular safety; 3) to maintain a sense of mobility, which is a departure from some previous efforts that didn't consider the larger roadway network; 4) to improve local traffic circulation, which is an issue that was particularly important in the Gibsonville area.

The study included extensive public involvement activities and a major effort at publicizing the study, including two public information workshops, two newsletters, meeting notices and newspaper advertisements, TAC and TCC briefings, and meetings with PART, GDOT, Guilford County Planning, and Greensboro City Planning. There may also be a neighborhood meeting in the vicinity of the Pine Street, Lowdermilk Street, and Holts Chapel Road area, where one or more crossings closures are proposed.

The study recommendations have been divided into three categories. Near term strategies are recommended to be implemented within 2 years. Mid-term strategies are proposed for implementation within 2 to 5 years. Implementation of long term strategies is sought within 5 to 10 years. The timeframes of these categories are not meant to be misleading, however, no funding has been allocated for any of the study recommendations. Additionally, there is significant planning work that needs to be completed before many of the proposed structures could be built. The study recommendations are as follows:

South Dudley Street – The long-term recommendation for this crossing is to construct a bridge over the North Carolina Railroad to accommodate a future rail siding. With the completion of the Greensboro Multi-Modal Transportation Center and resulting increases in rail traffic, new sidings will be needed in this area.

Gillespie Street, English Street, and Holts Chapel Road – The near term recommendation for this area is to relocate the crossing signals at Holts Chapel Road. There is an unused spur line at this location that is causing traffic to stop about 50 feet before the signals. The crossing surface should be improved, foliage cleared, and the spur line removed. The mid-term recommendation is to

conduct a detailed feasibility study to determine which crossing(s) would be most appropriate to close. There is a possibility of closing 2 crossings, but a closer examination will be needed to determine what is practicable.

Franklin Boulevard – This crossing present difficulty due to the large number of school buses that frequently obstruct traffic and increase the potential for pedestrian crashes. The near term recommendation is to install longer gate arms and to begin the planning process to determine if this crossing can be reconfigured to function adequately. The most likely solution will involve relocating a portion of Burlington Road. The mid-term recommendation is to implement the outcomes of the planning studies.

O’Ferrell Street – If this crossing is closed, there will be a need to provide alternative access for emergency vehicles and residents of that area. One proposal is to extend Naco Road from O’Ferrell Street to Old Burlington Road, just west of the Urban Loop. This extension could be implemented in stages, allowing O’Ferrell Street to be closed once Naco Road reaches Ward Road.

Ward Road – In the near term, installation of longer gate arms is recommended to enhance safety. Also in the near term, a feasibility study is recommended to determine whether the geometry of Penry Road and Burlington Road can accommodate an extension of Ward Road to Penry Road. Due to the planned expansion of Greensboro Technical Community College, this corridor will need improvements in the next several years. The long-term recommendation is to construct a grade separation on Ward Road, most likely an underpass.

Maxfield Road – This crossing is recommended to be closed once Naco Road is extended as far as Buchanan Church Road.

Wagoner Bend Road – A grade separation is recommended for this crossing, concurrent with the extension of Naco Road. The Naco Road Extension is the key to the success of all the recommended crossing improvements between Franklin Boulevard and Old Burlington Road.

Frieden Church Road and McLeansville Road – One option in this vicinity is to close the Frieden Church Road crossing and construct a grade separation at McLeansville Road. Another option is to extend Frieden Church Road generally westward, roughly parallel to the railroad tracks, along the north side, to Burlington Road. This option allows the closure of 1 public crossing and 3 private crossings. If this option is selected, it is recommended that NCDOT and the developer work together to ensure its success, because it would be very beneficial to close that many crossings with on project.

Pine Street and Lowdermilk Street – These two crossings are so close as to be redundant. The recommendation is to divert traffic from the Lowdermilk Street crossing to Pine Street via Greensboro Street. Also recommended is the installation of a traffic signal at the Pine Street-East Market Street intersection to accommodate the resulting increase in traffic; widening Pine Street to install left turn lanes; and resurfacing Greensboro Street. There may be a public meeting regarding these crossings sometime soon, due to some perceptions of inadequate notice within the immediate surrounding area. A targeted mailing is recommended for this purpose, because once there are specific proposals for such a project, there is a much higher level of public recognition and interest.

Richard Atkins expressed thanks to GDOT staff in helping to review and craft some of the study recommendations. Some of the concepts have changed substantially since the time of the last public meetings and the follow-up meetings to reflect the received public input. Compliments were also extended to the study team and the NCDOT Rail Division for their responsiveness throughout the process. Except for the near-term recommendations, this project is primarily conceptual planning, since there is no identified source of funding, but it presents a clear vision for how this corridor could look. As development occurs in the City and the County, the information and recommendations of this study will become increasingly valuable.

There is a municipal agreement between the City of Greensboro and NCDOT regarding the outcomes of this study. In addition, the study team recommended that the MPO adopt a resolution to implement and meet the intent of the agreement. Implementation of the study findings contingent upon the TAC designating these concepts as priority improvements.

Jeff Sovich commended Richard Atkins and the NCDOT Rail Division for their work on this study and for remaining flexible with their recommendations. With regard to the Gillespie Street, English Street, Holt's Chapel Road area, the MPO emphasizes its request for the Rail Division to conduct a detailed feasibility study to determine what improvements are needed, without pre-conceived outcomes. Richard Atkins stated that Don Bryson would be the contact person for any remaining concerns with the verbiage on the Gillespie Street, English Street, Holt's Chapel Road recommendations in the final report.

Jeff Sovich advised that the next steps in the study process would begin with GDOT's investigation into the need for an additional public meeting about the study recommendations for the Pine Street and Lowdermilk area for enhancing public input and awareness. This would be followed by a City Council briefing session on the study recommendations in September, and a public hearing in October with a resolution to endorse the study findings and authorize implementation of those recommendations. The resolution being considered today gives MPO acceptance of the study findings and passes the matter on to the City Council for their consideration. The public hearing is needed to endorse the study findings, because the municipal agreement indicates that the City will work with NCDOT on implementing the recommended improvements, such as approving street closures within the City. The MPO resolution endorses the projects on the conceptual level and within the context of involvement in later implementation steps.

The MPO resolution acknowledges the proactive efforts of the study in identifying rail corridor and highway crossing improvement needs in the east Greensboro and Guilford County area; requests that NCDOT conduct a feasibility study to determine specific improvement needs in the Gillespie Street, South English Street, and Holts Chapel Road area as soon as possible; requests that NCDOT seek to identify potential funding sources for short term improvements and to initiate needed studies as soon as practicable; and endorses the study process and study findings. The requested action is to adopt the resolution as presented.

Bob Landreth stated that he had a personal financial interest in a property potentially affected by the recommendations of the study. He said that he attended one of the public hearings regarding the study and, as a private citizen, submitted comments. Doug Galyon stated that he has had no outside contact with Bob Landreth regarding the study or its potential impacts on the property in question. Bob

Landreth stated that he would abstain from the vote on the resolution. Robbie Perkins moved to approve the resolution as presented; Keith Holliday seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the resolution endorsing the findings and study process of the East Guilford Traffic Separation Study.

2. MPO Strategic Reports

Jeff Sovich advised that due to a change in Mary Rakestraw's standing meeting obligations, she would no longer be able to attend the scheduled TAC meeting time of 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. In order to avert this conflict, it is recommended that the TAC re-evaluate its meeting schedule. A proposed list of new meeting dates was distributed to TAC members in advance of this meeting for review. The proposal shifts the August, September, and October meetings from the fourth Wednesday of the month, to the fourth Thursday of the month. It has been noted by Bob Landreth that there is at least one conflict with that option. A preference has been expressed for keeping the same meeting date, but shifting to an earlier time.

Robbie Perkins suggested that the TAC meeting be scheduled to begin at 1:30 pm. Bob Landreth recommended that 1:45 pm be chosen instead. The TAC concurred to change its regular meeting time for August through December, 2003 to 1:45 pm. The meeting dates for those months remained unchanged.

Jeff Sovich advised that in a previous meeting Gregg Danzer of Pleasant Garden had inquired as to the timeline for progress with the US 421 interchanges project. This project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase and is awaiting completion of traffic projections. Traffic projections have not yet been completed by James Upchurch. Progress on this project is still pending and updates will be provided at future meetings.

Other Items

1. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon asked whether there was an established TIP project for a spot widening of Horse Pen Creek Road, across from Carlson Dairy Road. Mayor Holliday stated that there was not a TIP project in this area, but that he and Jim Westmoreland had discussed this issue and the possibility of making some shifts in the program in order to accommodate such a project. Don Vaughan stated that this location presents a safety concern that needs to be addressed. Doug Galyon recommended that MPO staff and NCDOT staff work together to investigate options for addressing the safety needs at this location. Keith Holliday made a motion for MPO staff and NCDOT staff to jointly investigate options for improving the safety of Horse Pen Creek Road, from Battleground Avenue to New Garden Road, and report back to the TAC. Robbie Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

The NC Moving Ahead! initiative was approved late in the legislative session and has been signed by Governor Easley, allocating approximately \$70 million for Division 7. Response on the status of Division 7's submitted list of projects should be received sometime in the next week. Keith Holliday stated that he hopes that staff will have the ability to influence the project selection process and to stay closely involved and engaged in getting the MPO's priority projects approved.

Don Vaughan inquired as to the status of secondary road maintenance funding in the newly approved state budget. Mike Mills stated that the available funding had been increased, but only slightly. Doug Galyon stated that the North Carolina Moving Ahead! initiative would help to absorb some of the demand for maintenance funding across the state. The Moving Ahead! review committee has been asked to focus on funding key roads, roads near schools, collector streets, signal warrant locations, and other similar needs.

Doug Galyon stated that the contract for construction of the Western Urban Loop from I-40 to Bryan Boulevard has been let. The contract for construction plans for the Urban Loop from I-85 to High Point Road will be considered by the Board of Transportation at its August meeting.

2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns

Gregg Danzer thanked the MPO for the letter he received from staff, which provided updated information on the status of the US 421 Interchanges project, and requested that the Project Development and Environmental Analysis branch hold a Local Officials Meeting to review recommendations of the environmental study, prior to the next public hearing.

3. Regional Transportation News

Scott Rhine advised that PART's FTA grants for the regional park and ride lots have cleared through the Department of Labor. PART has met with stakeholders on its park and ride lot project, including HiTran, GTA, and WSTA. Four specific parcels have been identified for the park and ride lots, some of which are vacant, while others contain existing development that can be partially retrofitted. There are also roughly a dozen other sites that are being evaluated as options. PART is looking at 3 zones for the park and ride facilities: within the central business districts, just outside the CBDs, and further out from the CBDs, which would be more attractive to car-pooling, van-pooling, and future expansion of PART Express routes and city bus routes. The locations include the planned PART transfer facility on West Market Street, lease space at the Greensboro Multi-Modal Transportation Center, a parcel in High Point near the HiTrans transfer station, and one lot in Winston-Salem.

PART Express averaged daily ridership has reached around 500, up from 300 when the service began. New stops have been added at Four Seasons Mall / Koury Convention Center, at Oak Hollow Mall, and in Kernersville.

PART will be hosting the kickoff meeting for the Socio-Economic Forecasting component of the travel model development process, on Thursday, July 24, with the model team and the selected consultant. This step is a crucial part of the overall model development effort.

4. Wrap-Up

Bob Landreth complimented NCDOT's timeliness in completing roadway construction projects, stating that delays in North Carolina are minor in comparison to those in Georgia and Florida.

Keith Holliday thanked NCDOT for its responsiveness and swift completion of the resurfacing projects on West Market Street and West Friendly Avenue.

The TAC adjourned at 3:48 p.m.